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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2006

Secretary Rice Visit Special Edition

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HEADLINES

Milliyet (mainstream): "Rice Renewed Trust"  
During Secretary Rice's critical visit, a decision was made to prepare a document on strategic vision and to further strengthen relations between the US and Turkey. Rice said the document envisions more frequent consultations and intensification of effort in areas of common interest. The Turkish side gave a clear message to Secretary Rice about the need for concrete action on the PKK. Rice emphasized the need for Iraqis to make an effort, hinting that the US does not look favorably on a possible cross-border operation by Turkey. Rice also said that the US has no better ally or stronger supporter in efforts to bring about a democratic Middle East and that Turkey serves as an example that Islam and democracy can co-exist. On Cyprus, the Secretary said that the US will continue to do what it can to break the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and that Greek Cypriots should also be helpful on this and on Turkey's EU membership. She expressed strong support for Turkey's EU process.

Hurriyet (mainstream): "A Promise to Redouble the Effort"  
Turkish counterparts gave Secretary Rice a tough message on the PKK: intelligence sharing is not enough -- PKK terrorism must end. Rice promised to redouble efforts and reactivate the trilateral process with Iraq, the coalition and Turkey. On the PKK presence in northern Iraq, Rice said that borders need to be as secure as possible, that Iraqi territory should not be used as a place to launch terrorism, and that US assistance on PKK issue will continue, but care must be taken not to harm stability in Iraq.

Vatan (mainstream): "After 3 Years, We are Once Again Strategic Partners," "Redoubling of Efforts on the PKK" The US and Turkey will prepare a document on their strategic vision as a way to overcome the March 1, 2003, Turkish parliament vote against cooperation in the war in Iraq and the July 4, 2003, Suleymaniye incident, in which Turkish special forces in northern Iraq were detained by US troops. During talks, FM Gul stressed that the PKK presence in Iraq is harming Turkey, but was clear that Turkey would not carry out a cross-border operation.

Yeni Safak (Islamist-oriented): "A New Vision for Partnership"

The future of Turkish-American relations is being redrawn as the two countries prepare a new strategic vision document. During talks, Secretary Rice promised to rejuvenate the three-way talks, stressing that the US was the first country to call PKK terrorists. FM Gul said Iran needs to respond to concerns of the international community and be more transparent, but urged that Iran not become another Iraq. On aid to Palestine, PM Erdogan urged that the US not penalize the Palestinians for their democratic choice. Rice said that the US is continuing humanitarian assistance. On Cyprus, PM Erdogan stressed the need for positive movement and Rice agreed that Turkish Cypriots had done the right thing.

Sabah (mainstream): "A New Vision with the US"

The "Strategic Vision" to be prepared by the two countries will include economic cooperation, a calendar for political-military consultations, a coordination mechanism on Iraq, and specific targets for the partnership. On Iran, Secretary Rice raised the possibility of trade sanctions

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against Iran with FM Gul, and said she expected Turkey's support if sanctions are imposed. FM Gul said Turkey was

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not very favorable toward sanctions, and that he hoped the situation could be resolved through diplomacy. He assured the Secretary that the Turks would give the right messages to Larijani during an expected meeting in Ankara next week. Rice also asked that Erdogan give the right message to Ahmedinejad if he meets with him in Baku.

Radikal (liberal): "New Page in US-Turkey Relations," "No Promise to Rice"

Among the many issues on the table, the PKK & Iran rose to the top. Secretary Rice requested Turkey support the collation against Iran and Turkey replied that without a UN decision they would not participate.

Other Headlines:

NTV (all-news TV): "US-Turkey Strategic Vision Document to be Prepared"

Zaman (Islamist-oriented): "US-Turkey Strategic Vision Era"

Cumhuriyet (left-leaning): "AK Party Gives in to Rice;

Strategic Vision Document will Restrict Turkey"

Turkiye (nationalist, mainstream): "US Should Take Concrete Steps"

Aksam (tabloid): "A Vision to Repair Damaged Relations"

COMMENTARY

Abdulhamit Bilici, Zaman: "Has America Turned its Back on the AK Party?"

"The people in this country who are bothered by democracy and economic stability are very skilled. One of their favorite refrains is that the government has lost the confidence of the West. They think 'if only their ties with the US could be broken, then we could get rid of them.' But fortunately, every time these dark circles are about to celebrate, developments seem to move in the other direction. US Secretary of State Rice came to Ankara yesterday. It is true that the Hamas issue has created some turbulence in the

relationship, in the same way that the PKK haven in Iraq has become a serious problem. But relations are not at a point that would make those who are looking for partners in the West for their illegitimate plans rub their hands together with glee. Just as there is not only one Turkey, there is not one, single America. There are those in Washington who from the very beginning have not been able to make their peace with the AKP. There may be others who joined that group following the disappointment of the March 1 vote. But Rice's messages in Ankara show that this approach does not reflect the views of the Administration. Rice talked about the importance of Turkey's EU process and praised the democratic evolution that has been carried out here. These statements show that the US Administration has not turned its back on Turkey or the AKP. If ties are to be broken, it would mean the AKP would have to turn its back on the United States. According to AKP foreign policy leaders, such a thing is unthinkable. Even though they may disagree with some policies of the Bush Administration, they are realistic enough to see the US as a kind of insurance against threats that may arise in Eurasia."

Fikret Bila, Milliyet: "Turkish-American Relations from Ankara's Perspective"

"According to Foreign Ministry sources, the message to Secretary Rice from Gul and Erdogan was essentially the

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same: the need to strengthen mutual trust, which is perceived to have been damaged, and to concentrate on common goals. The Turkish side stressed that the US-Turkish relationship should not be reduced to just one or two issues, but must be comprehensive and include energy, regional cooperation, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. The Turks told Rice that the relationship should

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not be defined by differences over Hamas or the PKK. This approach was shared by Secretary Rice, and the two sides announced their intention to draft a document outlining their strategic vision. Ankara expressed to Rice once again Turkey's expectations on the PKK, repeating that the establishment of a blatant PKK presence in northern Iraq and the infiltration of PKK militants into Turkey must be prevented, and that operational cooperation against the PKK must remain an option. On Iraq, the Turks made clear their desire for a broad-based government of national unity, and cautioned that the Kurdish regional authority should not be allowed to protect the PKK. They drew attention to efforts to create a fait accompli in Kirkuk, and emphasised that Iraq's natural resources must be shared by all Iraqis. On Iran, the Turks made clear to Rice that Turkey would not fall out of step with the international community, but said that every last effort should be made to resolve the issue diplomatically. What is important for Turkey is that the international community act together on the Iran issue. If that happens, Ankara will comply with international decisions. Turkey does not seek to mediate with Iran, but is trying to ensure that Iran gets the right message from a country it trusts. On Cyprus, the Turkish side expressed its hope that the US will do more to lift the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. The Turks said they recognize the importance of US support in the EU process, and in that context expect that the United States will be supportive of Ankara's legitimate expectations on Cyprus."

Yalcin Dogan, Hurriyet: "Ice Skating with Rice"

"The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is known to get up at 4 am and go to the gym. She also ice skates and plays the piano. She showed Ankara how good an ice skater she is despite the warm messages given outside. Turkish-U.S. relations are not going well. The US was very disturbed with the Valley of the Wolves, Iraq film and Hamas' Ankara visit. The impression that Rice left in Ankara is that the US is determined to hit Iran but the time of this is still uncertain. The Secretary did not request

anything from Turkey on Iran yesterday and our side was relieved. There are other options like northern Iraq, Afghanistan and the Diego Garcia Base for a possible attack on Iran but Turkey will eventually be affected by such an attack. When Turkey mentioned the PKK to Rice, she launched into a long fairy tale. She said that there is stability in northern Iraq now and it would be a mistake to damage that stability through a military intervention. This means that the PKK will continue its presence there."

Ibrahim Karagul, Yeni Safak: "Iran, Turkey and United Kurdistan"

"The visit of US Secretary of State will not provide anything new for Turkey's expectations regarding the PKK. We will end up being asked to believe the 'intelligence-sharing' rhetoric accompanied by the usual propaganda about the strength of Turkish-American ties. The US undoubtedly will promise Ankara to take action against the PKK as soon as Iraq becomes a stable country. The truth is that Iraq will never be stable again, nor will a 'State of Iraq' exist in the future. Iraq is going through a process of division and it is at a point of no return. Turkey should act together with Iran and Syria on the Iraq issue. Civil war in Iraq will continue until the US/UK intervention reaches its goals. We will have to deal with an Iraq dragged into a series of ethnic or religious sectarian fights. This is the way the US wants to see it. Iran is the real agenda for Rice's visit. The war plan against Iran is underway and the US is in the search of support from regional powers."

Cengiz Candar, Bugun: "The Rice Visit"

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"Secretary Rice made some important comments addressing Turkey's concern regarding the PKK's existence in northern Iraq even before she arrived in Ankara. Underscoring the ongoing efforts to prevent Iraq from turning to a shelter for any terrorist groups, she was mentioning the importance of the issue for Turkey. With Turkish troops positioned in the border area, Rice has given two messages through her comments about the PKK and the future of Iraq. The first message was a green light provided for Ankara to take any necessary action against the PKK within Turkish borders, while she gave another message to Baghdad when she asked the new Iraqi government to move forward on the PKK issue. Why is the US providing such clear support? The US wants to get Turkey on its side on the Iran issue and simply does not want to see Turkey become like Finland during the cold war era."

Hasan Cemal, Milliyet: "Rice's Visit"

"By coming to Ankara, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice showed that our countries' relations are pretty good. Since the end of the Second World War or the Cold War, the Turkish-US alliance has never lost its strategic importance. There have been ups and downs in the relations, or even crises. Yet, a balance was found every time and the two countries continued on their common path. The two countries cannot ignore one another but this does not mean that there are no differences of interest between Turkey and the US. It would be impossible for them to view every issue through the same lens. It is without doubt that both sides, particularly the US as the only superpower, will want to attract each other into their own area of play."

Sami Kohen, Milliyet: "While Waiting for a New Government in Iraq."

"Four months after the elections in Iraq, there is finally a chance for a new government. The chances of Jawad al-Maliki to form a wide-based coalition seem much higher than that of the temporary Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaferi. The fact that the Iraqi Parliament and the President assigned al-Maliki to the prime ministry proves that the rather disparate Iraqi society trusts him. Al-Maliki now has one month to form a broad-based government. The U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who came to Turkey yesterday,

told the traveling US press that the certain militia groups in Iraq can only be de-activated after the forming of a new government and she included the PKK in that group as well. In other words, Rice left the responsibility of erasing the PKK presence from northern Iraq to the Iraqis and the new government there. A number of questions come to mind. How long will it take for the al-Maliki government to be formed? How much importance will they give to the fight against the PKK when they have their own priorities? Will a broad-based government that will also include Kurdish elements be able to make such a decision? When Rice passed the ball to al-Maliki, did she seek answers to these questions?"

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